

NINCH Mid-Year Board Meeting

Friday, May 24, 2002

Washington, DC

Meeting Report

Present: David Green, Chuck Henry, Steve Hensen, Michael Jensen, Stan Katz, Joan Lippincott, Sarah Segura, Christine Sundt, Pat Williams

Regrets: Sarah Pritchard, Sam Sachs, Winston Tabb, John Unsworth,

ACTION ITEMS

1. A meeting with Robert Lynch, President of Americans for the Arts, was scheduled for Tuesday, May 28, when a proposal would be discussed for Americans for the Arts to act as guarantor for NINCH for the rest of 2002. A letter to the AfA Board, which meets June 9, is being prepared.
2. A new Budget Monitoring Subcommittee will meet via telephone June 18 at noon and will confer every two weeks to track current income and expenses.
3. Stan Katz will call Deborah Marrow at the Getty Grant Program and the Board will assist the Executive Director in assembling a proposal for a grant to review and evaluate NINCH's program and structure with a view to proposing new program and organization to allow for a sustainable FY2003 and beyond.

Executive Summary

Financial review

Stating that the twin goals for the meeting were to plan for the successful fiscal completion of FY2002 and the creation of a sustainable fiscal future for NINCH for FY2003 and beyond, David Green talked the board through the final budget and expenses report for 2001, first quarter and status quo projections for FY2002, and a set of three financial scenarios for FY2002.

The scenarios showed a) committed funds (giving a \$75,000 deficit); b) committed and expected funds (giving a \$60,000 deficit); and c) committed, expected and possible funds (showing a \$5,000 deficit). The third scenario assumed \$14,000 additional memberships; one corporate council membership (at \$10,000), salary allocation of \$10,000 from one grant, and contributions of \$20,000. [Of this \$54,000, \$12,000 has been pledged as of 6/3/02]

Contributions

CNI was reported willing to make a contribution, if others joined in. The Frick was trying for a \$5,000 contribution. Green reported conversations with ACLS about increasing its membership dues (to \$15,000 from \$10,000) and about making a similar partnership contribution. OCLC is also entertaining similar conversations.

Membership

Income from membership dues was already up over last year (\$141,000 over \$131,000) and Green reported reasonable expectations of meeting FY2002 goal of \$156,000 and of \$180,000 pledged for 2003 (which includes the new level of \$20,000 for Americans for the Arts). No funds had yet been committed for the Corporate Council campaign.

Budget & Expenses Sub Committee

A new budget & expenses sub-committee was created. Members Charles Henry, Stan Katz, Joan Lippincott, Samuel Sachs, and Pat Williams would monitor income and expenses every two weeks. Their first conversation will take place by phone on June 18 at noon.

Grant

Although the Getty Trust was not able to make an emergency contribution, the Getty Grant Program was interested in receiving a grant request for a review of NINCH's current program and fiscal structure. Such a review would also propose new structures for a sustainable organization. It is a priority to organize and submit such a proposal as the Board would like to commence the review by July 1.

Guarantor

In response to a question about whether an organization might be willing to absorb NINCH or to guarantee its financial existence through the end of FY2002, Pat Williams offered to open discussions with the President of Americans for the Arts. The Board prepared the outline of a letter to the Board of Americans for the Arts, in which it requested a 6-month guarantee of funds, while committing itself to raise as much of the necessary funds to keep NINCH afloat as it could. Ms. Williams stated that Americans for the Arts would not be interested in absorbing NINCH but would be interested in a stronger programmatic and strategic alliance.

Federation and New Partners

The Board was interested in the idea of a federation of like organizations, initially floated by John Unsworth. Unsworth has proposed this concept to the Association of Computers and the Humanities and the Text Encoding Initiative. Federation might be part of an eventual solution through its proposed sharing of resources between several small nonprofits. Other partners suggested, at least for a closer relationship, include the Center for Arts and Culture.

Summary Program Review

David Green reviewed the summary report on program activity. *The Guide to Good Practice* will shortly be published in its first iteration on a website made available through New York University <http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/affil/ninch/guide/>. The Working Group is doing late revisions to the text, which fell short of expectations despite a high level of input from the Group to the contracted team from the University of Glasgow. The Working Group will meet July 20 to discuss the next iteration of the Guide.

The prototype of *The Database of Digital Humanities Projects* is available for viewing and use <http://www.ninch.org/programs/data/>. The Working Group is now looking to other agencies to add records to those from the NEH and Getty. NEH and IMLS have agreed to write to grantees asking them to complete a form on the digital projects for which they have received funding.

Reports on all six of the 2001 *Copyright Town Meetings* are on the website <http://www.ninch.org/copyright/>; an overall report and an application to Kress will be ready in the next month. If approved, funds would be available in November 2002. \$15,000 in surplus funds from FY2001 is being used for three meetings this year.

The Computer Science and Humanities Conference has been scheduled for January 17-18, 2003, in DC. David has outlined a proposal to NSF for a planning meeting for a follow-up to the *Building Blocks Workshop*.

A *Museum Think Tank Meeting* is being organized for around ten key leaders in the museum field for July 23, hosted by the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The *Forum* has yet to be planned: Chicago had been discussed as a possible venue.

Full Report

Stanley Katz called the meeting to order at 10:15am, and as President Sam Sachs was unable to attend, Stan volunteered to chair the meeting until lunch, after which President-Elect Chuck Henry would take the chair. Stan emphasized the particular importance of this meeting because of NINCH's critical financial situation.

Approval of the minutes of the December 7, 2001 board meeting was moved by Christine Sundt and seconded by Chuck Henry and the motion passed unanimously.

David Green stated that his goals for the meeting were first to review the financial prospect for FY02 and what it will take to complete the year, and second, to consider changes that need to be put in place to guarantee that NINCH is sustainable for 2003 and beyond.

1. Financial Review

Green reviewed the financial reports before the Board: the final budget and expenses report for 2001; first quarter and status quo projections for FY2002; and a set of three scenarios showing: a) committed funds (showing a \$75,000 deficit); b) committed and expected funds (showing a \$60,000 deficit); and c) committed, expected and possible funds (showing a \$5,000 deficit). The third scenario assumed \$14,000 additional memberships; one corporate council membership (at \$10,000), salary allocation of \$10,000 from one grant, and contributions of \$20,000. It did not include a restructuring grant from the Getty Trust.

Stan asked if there had been any developments since the creation of the scenarios. Joan Lippincott described the possibility of a CNI contribution if it was matched by others and was part of a well-developed plan that included 2003.

ACLS

David Green spoke about an application he had sent at the request of Steven Wheatley, Vice President of ACLS, for raising ACLS dues from the current level of \$10,000 (from an original commitment of \$25,000) to \$15,000 for a three-year period. Wheatley had said in conversation that he was strongly recommending this action to the ACLS interim president and would report back by May 31. When asked about the possibility of a one-

time contribution from ACLS, Mr. Wheatley had explained that this would be difficult for ACLS right now as it had recently purchased office space in New York and funds would be short until its currently leased office space could be rented out. However, a contribution was a possibility, especially if there was a commitment from other organizations.

Joan Lippincott expressed dismay that not more scholarly societies had put money into NINCH after the clearly successful Building Blocks workshop. David noted the disappearance at ACLS of much discussion on digital issues (for example about electronic journal publishing). He thought there were still programmatic opportunities in working more closely with ACLS, perhaps returning to Stan's conception of NINCH playing a key role in assisting ACLS and its membership move forward on digital issues.

Rice

Charles Henry warned that he might be relocating for family reasons by January 1 and that the substantial dues and contributions from Rice (paying \$15,000 dues) could not be counted on for FY2003.

Getty

Stan brought the Board up to date on an initial approach to the Getty Trust. Jack Meyers (former deputy director of the Grant Program, now on sabbatical and shortly to move to Yale University) encouraged us to contact Grant Program Director, Deborah Marrow, about a request for emergency relief in FY2002 and assistance in re-structuring over a three-year period. In friendly conversation with Stan, Ms. Marrow made it clear that the Program would not supply any relief funds but might be interested in assisting NINCH review its structure and plan for a new form of organization in a process that included NINCH's stakeholders. Although some were disappointed about the Getty's inability to assist with the costs of holding the 2001 FORUM on their campus, Stan said it was important to move forward. He particularly recalled Marrow's remark that the Getty was most interested in NINCH's connecting museums with libraries.

Stan also emphasized that other approaches at the Getty were probably closed off and we should focus on working with Deborah Marrow, although he felt that seeking advice from Ken Hamma, now Advisor to the President for Technology, was not out of the question.

Michael Jensen commented on the increasing level of pledged dues as a sign of hope. David Green commented that now that the Board and staff are focusing on membership we are seeing results. The museum campaign has not been easy, because of the economy [although the Whitney committed just after this meeting] and we expect the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art to join at \$2,000 each in the next few weeks. With \$141,000 pledged for this year (\$131,000 was collected last year) we expect to reach our budgeted goal of \$156,000 and have a reasonable expectation of having \$180,000 pledged for 2003 (which includes the new level of \$20,000 for Americans for the Arts).

The Corporate Council campaign continues to be slow. For example, a positive and lengthy meeting with Apex has yet to produce results and conversations with IBM continue but also without concrete results. Michael Jensen said he would pursue Innodata, another digital services company.

On the Foundation front, Steve Hensen asked about the Delmas Foundation. Stan informed the Board about a temporary difficulty for anyone applying for humanities funding from Delmas.

Michael Jensen asked if we were not essentially in a cash-flow situation that loan guarantees could assist. Joan Lippincott pointed out that with a bare-bones budget the situation was more a revenue problem than a cash-flow problem.

Stan commented that foundation grant income would not be at all reliable and that we should anticipate more difficulty there instead of less. David Green mentioned John Unsworth's interest in developing a plan for a federation of cognate associations that might share resources and avoid duplication of effort.

Charles Henry, expressing surprise over the extent of the worst-case projected deficit, proposed forming a budget-monitoring sub-committee. This proposal was accepted, with Samuel Sachs, Stan Katz, Joan Lippincott and Pat Williams joining Charles Henry.

Christine Sundt suggested we take this opportunity to re-think both NINCH and the benefits of membership. She felt that there is a lot of support out there already and that this could be a time to strengthen NINCH through new relationships. David said that Jack Meyers had reported interest around the Getty in making NINCH more effective.

Taking up the issue of refining the benefits of membership, Stan said that one of the problems is that NINCH produces for the public good, so that itemizing exclusive benefits for members is not easy and we have the problem of “the free rider.” We can restructure dues to some extent, but for some organizations we can’t. He agreed with Chuck about a subcommittee with regular meetings: we should probably establish cut-off points, at which if progress is slow, we develop an exit strategy. From the scenario produced by David, the big issue is clearly how to get from scenario two (committed and expected) to the third scenario.

David Green mentioned the Frick was trying for a \$5000 contribution, but that it might have to be less. Stan asked David to send a membership invoice to SSRC for \$2000 directly to its president, Craig Calhoun.

Partners

Pat Williams, responding to Chuck Henry’s suggestion that we approach other organizations about merger or absorption, said that Americans for the Arts is willing to enter such discussions. She is also interested in the idea of the federation and would like us to talk to Ellen Lovell, now president of the Center for Arts and Culture, whom she thought was a good fund raiser, a policy person, and well known in the community. Stan agreed, noting that the Center was also in transition as an organization. He would be speaking with her shortly and David would also be meeting with her in early June.

Pat suggested an approach to Bob Martin at IMLS, especially to get a clear sense of his discretionary funds. Steve Hensen suggested Duke’s Paul Conway as a good resource for these issues. Chuck commented that CLIR had recently been more supportive of NINCH and might also be brought into these discussions at some point. Pat Williams noted that recently in New York, Alberta Arthurs, former head of Arts & Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation, expressed great appreciation of and interest in NINCH, commenting that if it didn’t exist, we would have to invent it. This was a sentiment we should leverage in some way.

Stan said that the game is to find a range of effective partners so that we can go to the membership in good faith and say that we are in a transition but will be coming back next year for their dues. Chuck Henry added that the Board needs to make a statement

to the world, declaring how NINCH has been highly successful but now needs to diversify and incorporate itself into a larger context of arts and cultural institutions.

Americans for the Arts

Members were interested in taking up Pat Williams' offer of a discussion with Americans for the Arts and plans were made for a draft letter and a meeting with its president, Robert Lynch, for Tuesday, May 28. NINCH might work for an interim agreement with Americans for the Arts: Pat thought a 6-month agreement might be a realistic scenario, with Americans for the Arts acting as a bridge, but she didn't think her organization should absorb NINCH, preferring the investigation of a federation arrangement with many other groups. The Board of Americans for the Arts meets June 9 so Stan encouraged us to move ahead as promptly as possible. There was much positive discussion about the compatibility between the two organizations.

The Board outlined a letter to Americans for the Arts that cited:

- the need for NINCH to further evolve and to be more deeply integrated with the arts and cultural programs in the nation;
- the extensive contributions NINCH had made to the cultural community (the Guide, the Copyright Town Meetings, the Building Blocks workshop, the Computer Science and Humanities initiative, the Museum CIO Think Tank);
- the need for NINCH to re-evaluate itself as it goes through a transition;
- the support needed as we go through these changes;
- the sense that a federation of cognate associations might be the most effective way to develop and grow programs. We would need several months to work out the logistics;
- the commitment of the Board to actively solicit other funding sources as part of the process.

The Getty Grant

Stan said we should simultaneously pursue the possibility of a grant from the Getty for a planning/evaluation process to reposition NINCH that would emphasize stakeholders. We can say that we are working on clearly articulating a new structure for NINCH with, we trust, American for the Arts as the guarantor for 2003. We should see about starting the process by July 1. One comment emphasized that we should stress with the Getty the

need for the range of cultural organizations being finely attuned to where the new horizons are (portals, asset management, etc.) and that NINCH can be critical with this.

Stan commented that clearly NINCH is too good an idea to let go.

2. Summary Program Review

David Green reviewed the summary report on program activity.

Guide to Good Practice: Glasgow University's Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII) has essentially finished its work and is now correcting tables and securing copyright permissions. HATII director, Seamus Ross agreed that NINCH could use up to \$2200 of Glasgow's funds for further copy editing. Green reported that there was some dissatisfaction with Glasgow's work overall and that the volunteer NINCH Working Group was conducting its own set of revisions. Most of the chapters are done and are being revised on the NYU site. A copy editor has been identified and the Working Group plans to release the first iteration in the next few weeks. The Working Group is meeting July 20 to discuss the next iteration together with plans to sustain and workshop it. There was some discussion of whether all of the remaining funds should go to HATII, given the level of dissatisfaction with the result. David believes that the Guide will open up new possibilities for NINCH (perhaps through income generating workshops). Perhaps NINCH could subcontract with IMLS to do a set of workshops and a membership benefit could be free attendance.

The Database of Digital Humanities Projects: the database is proceeding with records from digital projects funded by the Getty Grant Program now being entered and completed. John Unsworth is negotiating with Don Waters at the Mellon for Mellon grant records. The NEH has agreed to include a letter in grant recipients' packets asking them to complete a form with the information needed to make the database most useful. David Green thanked Michigan University, Rice University and the University of Virginia for continuing to contribute in-kind resources.

Copyright Town Meetings – Reports on all six of the 2001 meetings are now on the website; an overall report to the Kress and an application for a new series of meetings should be ready in the next month. However, if approved, funds would not be available until November. NINCH has \$15,000 in surplus funds to use on three meetings this year.

A successful meeting, with well over 200 people, was held in St. Louis at the joint VRA-ARLIS conference. Planned for September are an all-day workshop/town meeting at the Museum Computer Network conference on the creation of IP Policy in museums (Sept. 7) and an all-day meeting on media issues at the Georgia Institute for Technology (Sept. 30).

Building Blocks: – David has outlined a proposal to NSF for a planning meeting for a follow-up to the Building Blocks Workshop. He said that there was still tremendous residual energy from the participants in the original workshop, to which Michael Jensen also attested.

The Computer Science and Humanities Conference has been scheduled for January 17-18, 2003, in the new National Academies building at 500 Fifth Street, Washington, DC.

Museum Think Tank Meeting: A strategizing session with a few key leaders in the museum field has been arranged for July 23 in Washington. The Smithsonian American Art Museum is hosting the meeting. David felt this might become part of the redesign strategy funded by Getty.

Forum: the membership meeting for 2003 is an open question. Chicago had been discussed as a possible venue (with some mix of the Art Institute, the Newberry, the Council on Research Libraries, the Society of American Archivists, the Library of the University of Chicago and the Chicago Historical Society as potential hosts. Joan Lippincott was impressed by a meeting she attended at the University of Chicago. Pat suggested that money be put in the budget to the Getty for the Forum and use it as a stakeholder meeting. Steve Hensen commented on the high hotel rates in Chicago.

The Board adjourned at 2pm. No meeting date for the next meeting was determined.